



# Pequannock Little League

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Umpire Clinic 4/1/2021

# Introduction

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- ▶ **Thank you for volunteering**
  - ▶ Great way to get involved to help the league and the players
    - ▶ Added bonus: You learn more about the game and end up enjoying the game more
  
- ▶ **Overview of Clinic**
  - ▶ “Basic Training” class intended to familiarize new volunteers with common situations, rules and “how to’s”
  - ▶ Helps the new umpire know what to do on the field
  - ▶ Refreshes rules/mechanics for experienced umpires



# COVID Protocols

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Do not attend games if you are not feeling well or have been around anyone that is sick or quarantined.

- ▶ Contact the league supervisor if you can not attend the games

Report to the Home team bench and have the coach take your temperature prior to getting ready for the game.

Face mask are required when entering the field and through the pre-game coaches ground rules meeting.

- ▶ You may remove you mask during the game, but keep as much distance between coaches and players as possible throughout the game. Between innings do not meet mingle with co-umpire if it is not necessary.

Consider purchasing your own umpire mask if you are going to umpire behind the plate.

- ▶ If you are going to use the supplied umpire mask, you must wipe down the mask before and after use with supplied Clorox wipes that will be in the equipment box.
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# Expectations for Umpires

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- ▶ **Maintain positive attitude and professionalism at all times**
  - ▶ Project the example of the attitude we expect from everyone else
- ▶ **Keep tempers in check**
  - ▶ Umpires expected to have “thick skin”
  - ▶ Don’t have “quick triggers” for ejections  
*(more on ejections later)*
- ▶ **Be out there for the league and players**
  - ▶ Not solely to demonstrate that we’re “in control” .....  
.....**But** ... know how and be able to maintain or regain control



# Expectations for Umpires

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- ▶ Understand and implement the rules as best you can
  - ▶ Always strive to get better and learn more about the game
  - ▶ Understand that everyone makes mistakes – don't dwell on them but learn from them for next time
    - ▶ Dwelling on a mistake will cause you to “daydream” and lose focus for the next few plays and possibly miss calls



# Length of Games

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- ▶ 2 hours from the “scheduled start”
  - ▶ Not the time the game starts i.e. 5:30PM-game ends at 7:30 PM
- ▶ Do not start an inning after 1 hour and 45 minutes
- ▶ 2 hour time limit is reach, the game is over
  - ▶ If there is a count on the batter, he/she may finish the at-bat
- ▶ If the game is tied at the 2 hr. time limit, the game stands if the home team has tied or gone ahead.
- ▶ If the away team is at bat and ties the game or goes ahead, you revert back to the last full inning for score



# Length of Games cont.

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- ▶ **Major Division**
  - ▶ May play until 10:00PM
- ▶ **International Divisions is limited to 90 minute games**



# Arrival at Field

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- ▶ **At least 15 minutes before the scheduled start time**
  - ▶ Call league supervisor if you are going to be late
- ▶ **Scan the field for proper conditions, have coaches address**
  - ▶ Standing water
  - ▶ Equipment left on field
  - ▶ Bases in proper position
- ▶ **Decision to cancel games due to weather is up to both Coaches and league Supervisor**
  - ▶ Assume all games are still “on” until you are notified by Coaches or league Supervisor





# Pre Game Meeting

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- ▶ Meet with both coaches to go over field specific ground rules and league rules
- ▶ Outline your “strike zone” to coaches
- ▶ Collect your payment voucher “before” the start of the game
- ▶ During the games watch for:
  - ▶ Proper catchers equipment
  - ▶ Damaged bats
  - ▶ Uniforms
  - ▶ Players and coaches staying within the coaching boxes and dugout areas



# Pausing before making the call *(Part 1 of 2)*

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## ▶ Problem

- ▶ Umpires sometimes feel pressure to make quick calls (nerves, knowing everyone is watching you, the fast pace of a play)
- ▶ In a fast action play, a new umpire will sometimes make a split second decision and make a quick call
- ▶ Quick calls are many times wrong

## ▶ Examples

- ▶ Close play at first. What did you really see? Did runner's foot hit the bag first, or was the ball caught first? Are you absolutely sure of your call? Are you sure first baseman didn't pull his foot?
- ▶ Runner stealing 2<sup>nd</sup> with a close tag. After your quick "out" call, you notice the ball on the ground between the runner and the fielder.



# Pausing before making the call *(Part 2 of 2)*

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## ▶ The Solution

- ▶ Stay calm at all times before, during and after a play
  - ▶ Feeling out of control will sometimes cause a knee-jerk fast call
- ▶ Watch the play through to completion ....And think about what you just saw
- ▶ Force yourself to delay (maybe by counting to 3) before verbalizing your call
- ▶ Think to yourself ... “I’m **sure** he was safe/out” ... then say it for real, and appear confident as you make the call.
- ▶ On tag plays, **find where the ball is after the play is over** and *confirm the out* only after verifying that the fielder had the ball in the tag-hand and had never lost control of it during the play (if the fielder is picking it up off the ground, runner was likely safe)
  - ▶ **If you think the tag was good but you aren’t sure where the ball is, ask the fielder to show you the ball, then make the call as needed.**



# Coach Appeals vs. Judgment Calls

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- ▶ Coaches can only argue or appeal a call when they deem a rule was violated or not applied correctly
- ▶ Coaches cannot appeal or argue judgment calls
  - ▶ Six Common Judgment Calls
    - ▶ Ball or Strike (i.e., strike zone)
    - ▶ Fair or Foul
    - ▶ Safe or Out
    - ▶ Whether obstruction or Interference has occurred
    - ▶ Whether a hit ball is an Infield Fly
    - ▶ Check swing calls
- ▶ Very common for a coach to argue a safe or out call. This is not proper and is not allowed, but they do it anyway.



# Plate Umpire Responsibilities

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- ▶ Call balls and strikes
- ▶ Maintain game time, “warm-up and play ball”
  - ▶ 5 Pitches between innings – 8 for new Pitchers
- ▶ Keep count on batters number of outs
- ▶ Determine “Fair” ball (live) & call “Foul” ball (dead) on all batted balls
- ▶ Call “Live” ball after play becomes dead. (after foul balls or time outs
- ▶ Confirm score at the end of each half inning with both teams.
- ▶ Call “In-Field Fly” (Majors only) *we’ll explain later*



# Field Umpire

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- ▶ Call Base Runners “Safe or Out”
- ▶ Assist on “In-Field Fly” call, if appropriate
- ▶ Responsible for base runners touching the base
- ▶ Calls Interference/Obstruction on fielders or base runners
- ▶ Keep count on the batter and number of outs
  - ▶ Back up your home plate partner

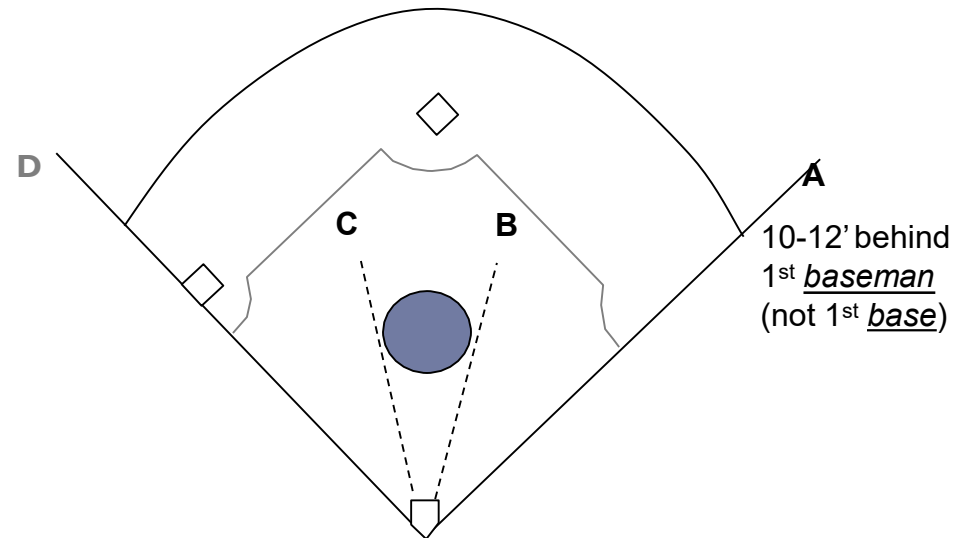
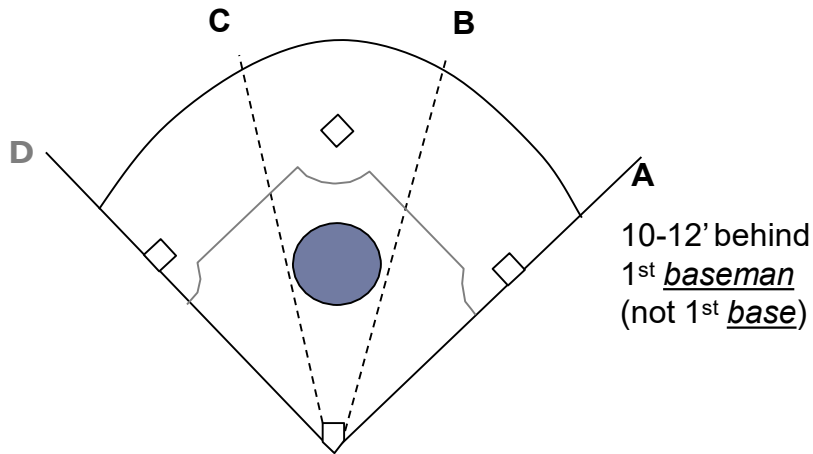


# Base Umpire Positions

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## Minors and Majors

## Juniors, Seniors, Big League



**60' Diamond**

**90' Diamond**

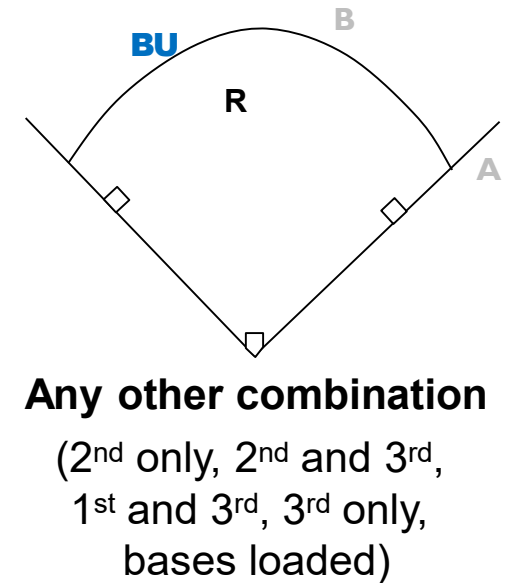
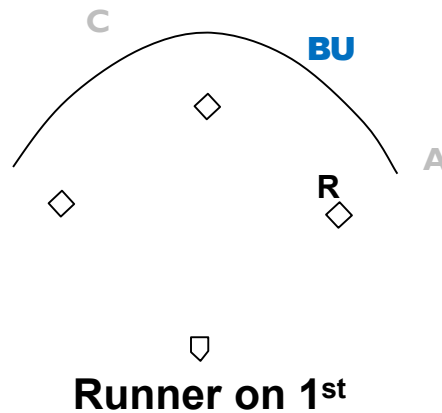
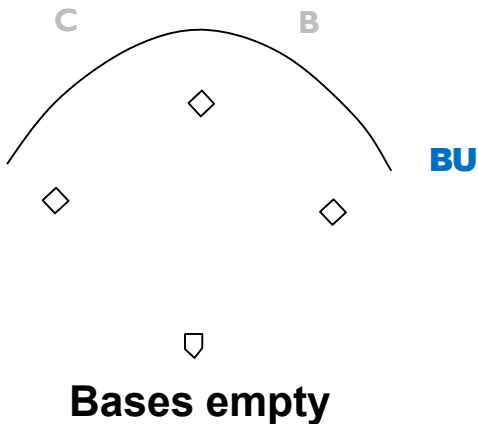
**Note:** The "D" position is only used when there are 2 or more base umpires (i.e., 3 and 4 umpire crews). It won't likely be used in regular season games since most games will use 2-umpire crews.



# Position at Start of Play (aka .... Rotation)

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## 60' Diamond





# Where to go when ball is hit

*Out – You're in ..... In-You're out*

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- ▶ **Ball is in –You're out, Ball is out –You're in**
    - ▶ If a hit ball stays in the infield and is fielded by an infielder, BU stays outside and makes call from shallow outfield or in the dirt
    - ▶ If a hit ball gets through to the outfield (either on a fly ball or ground ball), BU busts inside, turns to watch runner tag first and follows runner and ball to the play. BU should be set ahead of arriving runner:
      - ▶ Only way to keep up with the runners and be in position for the play
      - ▶ Helps you stay out of the way of the ball coming in
      - ▶ *Aside from being the proper mechanic, it makes your life as the BU much easier!*
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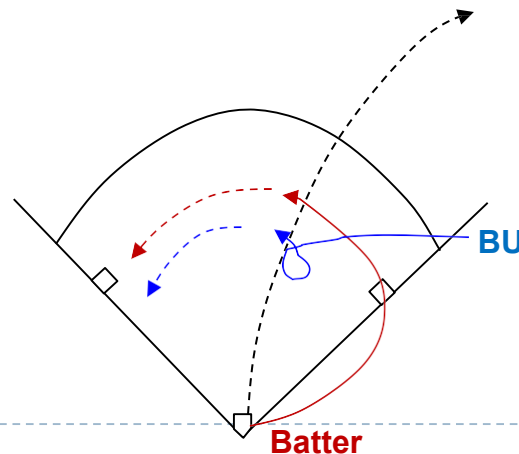
# Where to go when ball is hit

*Out – You're in ..... In-You're out*

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## ▶ Example Play: Outfield hit with no one on

- ▶ BU breaks into infield, turns left to watch runner touch 1<sup>st</sup>, then moves with and ahead of runner to be ready for a play at 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>
- ▶ No way to stay out and beat runner to bases as well as watch runner touch 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - ▶ The runner would be behind you and the ball would be coming in from your back
  - ▶ You might even be in the way of the ball coming in



# Infield Fly Rule

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## ▶ Official Definition:

- ▶ Fair fly ball (except line drives and bunts) that can be caught by an infielder with “ordinary” effort, when 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> (or 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>) are occupied and less than 2 out

*(just think: The situation where you have 2 “sitting ducks” on what should be an easy pop-up when defense may want a double-play)*

## ▶ Notes & Clarifications

- ▶ Any fielder (including pitcher, catcher or outfielders) can catch an infield fly
- ▶ Umpires calls it when the ball is at its *maximum* height (its “apex”)

## ▶ Purpose

- ▶ Infield fly is meant to avoid defense taking unfair advantage of offense by obtaining a “cheap” double-play on an intentionally dropped ball



# Foul Balls

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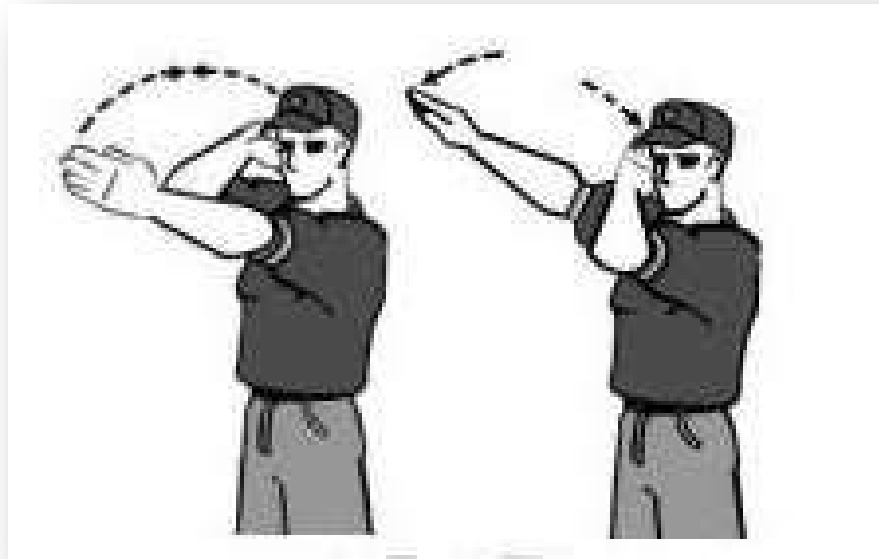
- ▶ A hit ball becomes foul when .....
- ▶ It settles to a stop in foul territory between home and 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>
- ▶ First touches ground in foul territory past 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>
- ▶ Touches an object in foul territory before being caught
- ▶ Bouncing ball passes 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> in foul territory (i.e., does not cross over ANY PART of 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base)
- ▶ Note
  - ▶ The foul lines are in fair territory. Any ball that touches ANY PART of the foul line is FAIR
    - ▶ **Never call or yell “Fair Ball!” – Just POINT fair ....**
    - ▶ Whether a ball is Fair or Foul is a JUDGMENT CALL and is not subject to appeal or argument



# Foul Tips

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- ▶ Struck pitched ball that goes directly into the catcher's mitt and caught
  - ▶ If it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Strike the batter is OUT
  - ▶ If a runner is stealing, he/she may continue at their own risk of being thrown out



# Strike Zone

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- ▶ **Official Strike Zone by Little League**
  - ▶ Over any part of home plate left or right and from the top of the batter's armpits to the top of the batter's knees
- ▶ **Upper Minors and Lower Minors strike zones are expanded for "player pitching"**
  - ▶ **Note: Lower Minors – Only Strikes are called when Coaches pitch, Coaches can't walk batters**



# PQLL Strike Zone

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## ▶ Boys

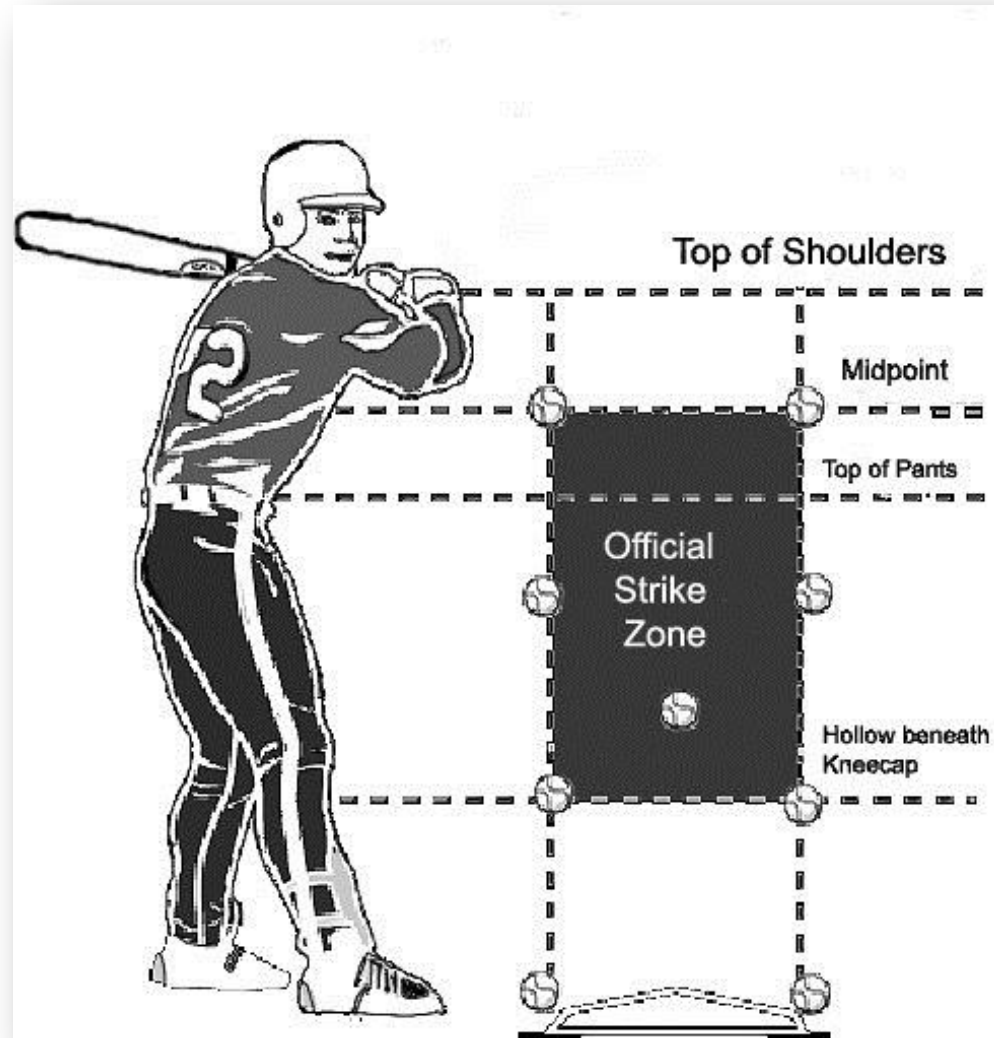
- ▶ Upper Minors – Front Shoulder to Lower Knee, ball on each side of the plate
- ▶ Lower Minors – Bottom of Chin to Mid/Lower Shin, ball and ½ on each side of the plate

## ▶ Girls

- ▶ Upper Minors – Front Shoulder/Armpit to Lower Shin, ball on each side of the plate
- ▶ Lower Minors – Chin to Top of Ankle, ball and ½ of each side of the plate



# Strike Zone





# Awarding a Base

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## ▶ Batter

- ▶ 4 –“called” balls (pitched)
- ▶ Batter struck by pitch, in the air or on a bounce from the ground
- ▶ Interference by the Catcher
- ▶ Both Plate and Field umpires must keep the count

## ▶ Note

- ▶ There are NO Balks in Little League at the Major & Minor Level



# Sliding rules

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- ▶ All players must slide and avoid when a play is being made at a base or home plate to avoid a collision.
- ▶ There is NO head first slinging, the runner is call OUT
- ▶ Fielders must not block the base when they are not making a play on the ball, this “Obstruction”
  - ▶ Obstruction is a “delayed” call and signaled by Right Arm out to the side with a closed fist



# Bunting

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- ▶ A batted ball not swung at, but an intentionally struck ball by placing the bat in the ball's path and tapping it slowly
- ▶ An attempt must be made to make contact with the ball for a bunt to occur
  - ▶ Merely placing the bat in the strike zone is not a bunt
- ▶ The batter can not show bunt, then pull back and swing at the ball



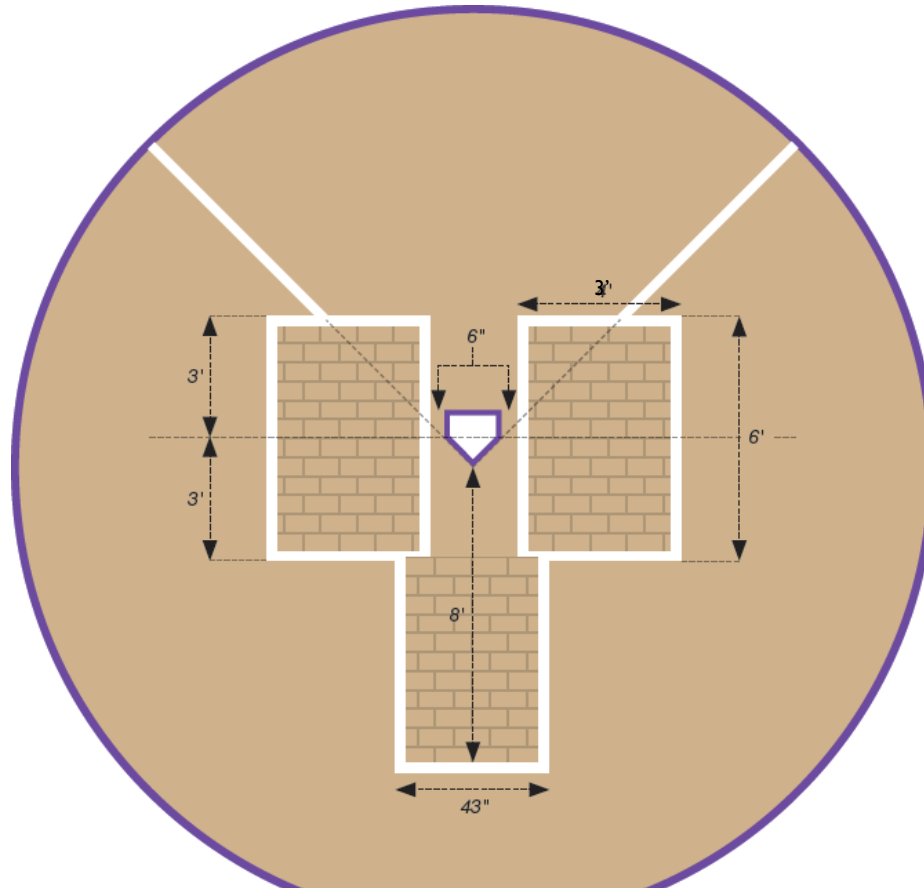
# Batter's Box

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- ▶ Baseball – 3'W x 6'D
- ▶ Softball – 3'W x 7'D
  
- ▶ Batter's must be on or inside batter's box when making contact with the ball. If the foot is completely outside the batter's box when contact is made, batter is OUT.



# Batter's Box



BATTER'S & CATCHER'S BOX B					
	SQ FEET	Beacon Pro Bricks *		Shredded Clay	
		2-1/4" DEPTH	4" DEPTH	3" DEPTH	4" DEPTH
BATTER'S BOX – 6 x 4 (per box)	24	102 bricks	186 bricks	18 bags	24 bags
CATCHER'S BOX – 5 x 4	20	85 bricks	155 bricks	15 bags	20 bags

# Stealing

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- ▶ Runner may steal upon the pitched ball reaching the batter; not home plate. Stealing is guided by league specific rules
  - ▶ Note: Major's Softball – can leave upon pitcher's release
- ▶ **Leaving Base Too Early**
  - ▶ Runner is returned to the base. If the runner leaves too early and ball is batted, runner may only advance one base more than batter.



# Base Running

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- ▶ **Base Runners must stay within a 3 foot area directly between bases – base line**
- ▶ Exception – To avoid a collision with a fielder making an attempt on a batted ball
- ▶ Runners – 1<sup>st</sup> Base, can turn left or right, as long as runner does not make an attempt to next base



# Base Coaches

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- ▶ Adult base coaches – no helmet needed
- ▶ Player base coaches – **MUST WEAR APPROVED HELMET**
  - ▶ Base coaches may never “touch a player” during an active play.
  - ▶ Must make an attempt to get out of the way of a play on the ball





# Common myths

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- ▶ **Overrunning first**
- ▶ Batter gets first base whenever he/she's hit by pitch
  - ▶ **Called strike on a hit batter**
- ▶ Ball is dead on a foul tip
- ▶ Batter's hands are part of the bat
- ▶ It's always a strike if batter doesn't pull bat out of the strike zone on a bunt attempt
- ▶ Others .....



# Time For Some Questions?

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- ▶ Do we have time for a few more rules?



# Interference vs. Obstruction

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- ▶ **Interference** usually refers to an act by the offensive team that impacts the defense making a play.
- ▶ **Obstruction** refers to a fielder who hinders a runner.
- ▶ In the simplest of terms, **interference** is a 'penalty' against the offense, and **obstruction** is a penalty against the defense



# Interference

- ▶ Any act by the batter or runners that obstructs, hinders, impedes or confuses a fielder attempting to make a play.  
Examples:
  - ▶ Runner running into or impeding fielder in act of fielding a batted or thrown ball
  - ▶ Batter impeding catcher from throwing out a runner who's stealing,
  - ▶ Runner from 1<sup>st</sup> sliding into fielder attempting to turn a double-play,
  - ▶ Runner who is hit by fair ball before it passes by a fielder.



# Interference

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## ▶ Offensive Interference

- ▶ Immediately call “Time! That’s interference!” (**immediate dead ball**)
- ▶ Member of offense who committed interference is out. Other runners awarded last base legally held or next base if forced (batter-runner awarded first if not yet at 1<sup>st</sup>).

## ▶ Example situations

- ▶ **Example 1:** Runner on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. Batter hits and ball strikes runner leaving 2<sup>nd</sup>. Umpire calls “Time!, That’s interference!”
  - ▶ Runner hit by ball is out, batter awarded 1<sup>st</sup> base and runner from 1<sup>st</sup> is forced to 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- ▶ **Example 2:** Runner on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. Batter hits and ball strikes runner leaving 1<sup>st</sup>. Umpire calls “Time!, That’s interference!”
  - ▶ Runner hit by ball is out, batter awarded 1<sup>st</sup> base and runner from 2<sup>nd</sup> returns to 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- ▶ **Example 3:** Batter bunts the ball and in leaving for 1<sup>st</sup>, kicks the ball with his foot when ball was in fair territory.
  - ▶ Batter is out; all other runners return to their bases.
  - ▶ If ball was in foul territory, batter is out only if kick was intentional



# Obstruction

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## ▶ Official definition

- ▶ Any act of a fielder who, while **NOT** in possession of the ball, impedes the progress of any runner. Examples: Fake tags, blocking a base, base path or home plate when not in possession of the ball.

## ▶ Concepts to understand when determining if obstruction has occurred

- ▶ Fielders have a right to be where needed to field a batted ball. Therefore, even if they do not yet have possession of the ball, but are moving to or in a position to field a batted ball, they have first right of position. The runner needs to move around or avoid the fielder in this case (otherwise they risk being called for interference).
- ▶ The above concept does not apply to fielders who are fielding a thrown ball. A fielder cannot be in a position or moving to a position that impedes a runner or blocks a base, home plate, or the base path, even while a thrown ball is in-flight and the fielder is preparing to make the catch (i.e., the catch is eminent).



# Obstruction

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- ▶ What happens when obstruction occurs (and what penalty is enforced) depends on which of the two types of obstruction has occurred.
- ▶ Type A – Immediate Dead Ball (**example**)
  - ▶ Occurs when a play is being made on the obstructed runner or when obstruction occurs on batter who hasn't yet reached 1<sup>st</sup>
  - ▶ Penalty enforcement
    - ▶ Immediately call "Time! That's obstruction!" Then award runner one base. Note: even if runner was going back into a base, the award is the next base.
- ▶ Type B – Delayed Dead Ball (**example**)
  - ▶ Occurs when no play is being made on obstructed runner
  - ▶ Penalty enforcement
    - ▶ Call "That's obstruction" (but do not call time). Let the play continue. When play is over, award the runner whichever base the umpire deems the runner would have reached had obstruction not occurred.
    - ▶ After the play: "Time! We had obstruction on the runner! Runner ended up at second, and runner stays at second!"



# Obstruction, both delayed calls

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# Ejections

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- ▶ Reasonable causes for ejection
  - ▶ Threats or cursing either verbally or via body language
  - ▶ Repeated complaints about calls (again, try to have thick skin)
    - ▶ Reserve ejections to those who really deserve it ....But don't permit anyone to continually demonstrate disrespect to either the umpire crew or anyone else involved in the game
  - ▶ Gross unsportsmanlike behavior
  - ▶ Flagrant malicious behavior
    - ▶ Example: "Plowing" the catcher while attempting to score
- ▶ If any of this behavior occurs stop the game and contact the league supervisor immediately

